



Iowa Olmstead Consumer Task Force

April 4, 2012

Dear Iowa Representatives and Senators,

The Iowa Olmstead Consumer Taskforce applauds the leadership of Senator Hatch and Representative Schulte in promoting a mental health and disability services system that provides for more equitable access statewide to services that Iowans need and deserve. However, we have some serious concerns regarding funding of the system which we want to share with you.

We understand the desire in the Legislature to provide relief to counties of the burden of property taxes to support the system, and like many stakeholders we see some very good features in the House amendments providing a mechanism for replacing county taxes with state appropriations over a five-year period. For example, the equalization of funding across counties, and the 3% minimum annual increases to lend predictability to local planning, address very important concerns that have long plagued the system. However, eliminating county funding means that the State of Iowa must provide \$125 million additional state dollars in order to simply maintain the services currently provided for consumers. This figure does not take into account the deficit in State funding for Allowed Growth that has been mounting for years. It also does not factor in the funding that will be needed to develop core services statewide, and to incentivize providers to shift to evidence based service models consistent with Olmstead principles.

If there are not adequate state dollars put into the redesign effort services will not be equitable, they will not be available, they will not be accessible, they will not be appropriate and they will not be acceptable to Iowans with mental health and disability services needs.

Specifically there will be:

1. An increased waiting list for services for Medicaid consumers.
2. Many, if not all, services for non-Medicaid consumers would also be at real risk of elimination.
3. Addressing the needs of additional, non-mandatory populations as recommended by the redesign work groups would likely be postponed indefinitely.
4. As a consequence, many individuals will be at risk of institutionalization.

The Supreme Court's 1999 Olmstead decision states that lack of funding for home and community based services is not an acceptable reason to put people in institutions, so Iowa risks a finding of non-compliance with federal statute.

Advocates for people with mental illness, brain injury and other disabilities anxiously await acceptable solutions to this critical issue of funding. We stand ready to support your efforts. For example we are aware of ways that other states generate revenue for specific disability services. Members of the Task Force have also suggested that you consider reinstating the county levy so that county funding will still be provided for mental health and disability services; that you phase in the replacement of county dollars with state appropriations over a longer period; or that you identify other state funding, such as the Rainy Day Fund, for the redesign. On behalf of the Olmstead Consumer Taskforce, I would ask that you give careful consideration to these options.

Sincerely,

Geoffrey M. Lauer

Geoff Lauer
Chair
Iowa Olmstead Consumer Task Force

Disability Organizations Who Support this Letter:

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| 1. Access 2 Independence of the Eastern IA Corridor (A2I) | 14. Iowa Developmental Disabilities Council |
| 2. AMOS (A Mid-Iowa Organizing Strategy) | 15. Iowa Disability Advocates Network (IDAN) |
| 3. Arc of East Central Iowa | 16. Iowa Mental Health Planning Council |
| 4. Arc of Iowa | 17. Iowa Olmstead Consumer Task Force |
| 5. Arc of Story County | 18. Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) |
| 6. ASK Resource Center | 19. NAMI of Greater Des Moines |
| 7. Autism Society of Iowa | 20. National MS Society - Upper Midwest Chapter |
| 8. Brain Injury Association of Iowa | 21. NE Iowa Center for Independent Living (NEICIL) |
| 9. Central Iowa Center for Independent Living (CICIL) | 22. P.A.D.S. of Linn County |
| 10. Disability Rights IOWA | 23. South Central Iowa Center for Independent Living (SCICIL) |
| 11. Heritage Area Agency on Aging | 24. South West Iowa Center for Independent Living (SWICIL) |
| 12. Illinois/Iowa Center for Independent Living (IICIL) | 25. Three Rivers Independent Living Center (TRILC) |
| 13. Iowa Advocates for Mental Health Recovery | |